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FM AMEMBASSY VIENNA
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SIPDIS

INFO EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

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SENSITIVE

STATE FOR EUR, EUR/ERA, EUR/AGS AND NEA/IPA

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SUBJECT: Abbas Plea for Continuation of EU Assistance

THIS MESSAGE IS SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED.

¶1. (U) PALESTINIAN PRESIDENT MAHMOUD ABBAS VISITED VIENNA ON MARCH 14. THE TALKS WITH GOA OFFICIALS CENTERED ON ABBAS' PLEA FOR CONTINUATION OF EU ASSISTANCE TO THE PALESTINIANS.

¶2. (U) ABBAS UNDERLINED THE PALESTINIAN COMMITMENT TO INTERNATIONAL TREATIES, THE OSLO ACCORDS, THE ROADMAP, AND AGREEMENTS WITH ISRAEL. HE STRESSED THAT THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE SHOULD NOT BE PUNISHED FOR HAVING CHOSEN THE PATH OF DEMOCRACY AND HAVING MADE ITS CHOICE IN FAVOR OF HAMAS. ABBAS NOTED THAT FATAH AND HAMAS WERE CURRENTLY CONDUCTING TALKS IN SEARCH OF A JOINT POLITICAL BASIS. NEGOTIATIONS WITH ISRAEL SHOULD CONTINUE AFTER THE ISRAELI ELECTIONS IN ORDER TO FIND COMMON SOLUTIONS, HE SAID.

¶3. (U) CHANCELLOR SCHUESSEL SAID THE EU RESPECTED THE ELECTION RESULT, BUT UNDERScoreD THAT MUTUAL RECOGNITION OF ISRAEL AND PALESTINE, RENUNCIATION OF VIOLENCE BY BOTH SIDES, DISARMAMENT, AND OBSERVANCE OF INTERNATIONAL ACCORDS WAS INDISPENSABLE AS THE BASIS FOR FURTHER EU ASSISTANCE. SCHUESSEL STRESSED THE EU NEEDED GUARANTEES THAT FINANCIAL SUPPORT WOULD NOT GO TOWARD TERRORIST OR EXTREMIST PURPOSES. OTHERWISE, THE EU WOULD SEEK OTHER PATHS TO HELP THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE. SCHUESSEL EXPLICITLY PRAISED ABBAS AS "LEADER WITH FIRM PRINCIPLES, READY TO BUILD NEW BRIDGES AND TO CROSS EXISTING ONES."

COMMENT

4.(SBU) SCHUESSEL'S REFERENCE TO THE POSSIBILITY OF LOOKING FOR "OTHER PATHS TO HELP THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE" PUT A RECENT EU PROPOSAL AT THE MARCH 10-11 FOREIGN MINISTERS' MEETING IN SALZBURG IN PERSPECTIVE. CFSP HIGH REPRESENTATIVE JAVIER SOLANA AND EU COMMISSIONER BENITA FERRERO-WALDNER HAD LAUNCHED A WORKING PAPER THREATENING TO CUT 50 PERCENT OF ASSISTANCE TO THE PALESTINIANS IF HAMAS DID NOT RENOUNCE VIOLENCE AND RECOGNIZE ISRAEL.

McCAW